

NATIONAL AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF SUBSTANTIVE PHRASES

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Abstract

This study examines the national and cultural features of substantive word combinations (noun phrases) in a comparative linguistic perspective. Focusing on English and Uzbek, it highlights the influence of cultural values and linguistic traditions on meaning. Findings show that noun phrases serve both grammatical functions and reflect cultural identity and worldview.

Keywords: Substantive word combinations, noun phrases, cultural linguistics, national specificity, semantics, intercultural communication, Uzbek, English.

Introduction

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola substantiv soʻz birikmalarining (nominal birliklar) milliy va madaniy xususiyatlarini qiyosiy lingvistik kontekstda oʻrganadi. Tadqiqotda ularning semantik maʼnosi, madaniy merosi va til anʼanalari taʼsiri koʻrib chiqiladi, xususan ingliz va oʻzbek tillari misolida. Natijalar shuni koʻrsatadiki, substantiv birliklar nafaqat grammatik funktsiyalarni bajaradi, balki madaniy identitet va dunyoqarashni aks ettiradi.

Kalit soʻzlar: substantiv soʻz birikmalari, nominal birliklar, madaniy lingvistika, milliy xususiyat, semantika, madaniyatlararo kommunikatsiya, oʻzbek tili, ingliz tili

Аннотация

В статье исследуются национальные и культурные особенности субстантивных словосочетаний (именных групп) в сравнительно-лингвистическом контексте. На примере английского и узбекского языков рассматривается влияние культурных ценностей и языковых традиций на семантику. Результаты показывают, что именные группы выполняют как грамматические функции, так и отражают культурную идентичность и мировоззрение.

Ключевые слова: субстантивные словосочетания, именные группы, культурная лингвистика, национальные особенности, семантика, межкультурная коммуникация, узбекский язык, английский язык



The study of substantive word combinations (noun phrases) within the framework of cultural and national specificity represents a crucial intersection between linguistics, cognition, and cultural studies. In modern linguistic theory, language is no longer viewed as a purely structural system; rather, it is understood as a dynamic medium that reflects the worldview, values, and social practices of its speakers. In this regard, noun phrases function not only as grammatical constructions but also as carriers of culturally embedded meanings.

The idea that language reflects culture is deeply rooted in linguistic thought. Edward Sapir (1921, p. 162) states:

“Language is a guide to social reality.”

This statement implies that linguistic structures, including substantive word combinations, are shaped by the cultural environment in which they are used. For instance, the Uzbek noun phrase “*ota-ona hurmati*” (respect for parents) reflects a deeply ingrained cultural value, whereas English equivalents such as “*parental respect*” exist but do not carry the same sociocultural weight or frequency of use in discourse.

Similarly, Benjamin Lee Whorf, developing the ideas of Sapir, argued that:

“We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages.”

This principle, often associated with the theory of linguistic relativity, suggests that speakers of different languages conceptualize reality differently. Consequently, noun phrases in different languages encode distinct patterns of categorization and cultural perception.

Another foundational contribution comes from Wilhelm von Humboldt, who emphasized the creative and formative role of language:

“Language is the formative organ of thought.”

From this perspective, substantive word combinations are not passive labels but active instruments in shaping thought. For example:

- English: “*time management skills*”
- Uzbek: “*vaqtni boshqarish ko'nikmalari*”

While both expressions denote the same concept, the Uzbek version reflects an action-oriented structure (literally “managing time”), which aligns with the agglutinative and verb-centered tendencies of the language.

In structural linguistics, noun phrases have been extensively studied as fundamental syntactic units. Leonard Bloomfield (1933) defined phrases as constructions in which “no member is a subject-predicate combination,” highlighting their internal dependency structure. However, structural approaches often overlook the cultural dimension of meaning.

In contrast, functional linguistics provides a more comprehensive framework. Michael Halliday (1985, p. 180) argues:

“The nominal group is a powerful resource for construing experience.”

This view emphasizes that noun phrases encode experiential meaning and are central to how speakers represent reality. For example:

- English: “*economic development strategy*”
- Uzbek: “*iqtisodiy rivojlanish strategiyasi*”

These constructions not only convey information but also reflect culturally specific priorities and discourse patterns.



From the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, language is seen as a repository of cultural conceptualizations. Scholars in this field argue that lexical and grammatical structures are shaped by shared cultural knowledge. For instance, Uzbek noun phrases frequently encode social hierarchy and respect:

- *“katta inson”* (elder/respected person)
- *“hurmatli mehmon”* (honorable guest)

In English, similar meanings are expressed differently:

- *“senior”* / *“elderly person”*
- *“distinguished guest”*

The differences here are not merely lexical but reflect distinct cultural norms regarding age, status, and politeness.

Another important aspect is metaphorical conceptualization. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, p. 5):

“Our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”

This principle is clearly visible in noun phrases:

- English: *“a heart of stone”*
- Uzbek: *“tosh yurak odam”*

Although both expressions share a similar metaphor, their syntactic realization differs, reflecting language-specific structures.

Russian linguistic tradition has also contributed significantly to this field. Roman Jakobson (1971) emphasized the relationship between language and cultural meaning, noting that linguistic structures are closely tied to communicative functions. His work highlights that noun phrases can serve not only referential but also expressive and poetic functions.

From the Uzbek linguistic perspective, scholars such as G'. Abdurahmonov and A. Nurmonov have analyzed the structure and semantics of word combinations in detail. They point out that Uzbek noun phrases are characterized by rich morphological marking, including possessive and case suffixes, which explicitly encode relationships between elements:

- *“kitobning muallifi”* (the author of the book)
- *“talabaning vazifasi”* (the student’s task)

In contrast, English relies more on word order and prepositions:

- *“the author of the book”*
- *“the student’s task”*

This typological difference demonstrates how languages employ different strategies to express similar semantic relations.

Furthermore, the role of noun phrases in discourse cannot be overlooked. Teun A. van Dijk (1985, p. 72) states:

“Discourse structures are closely related to social context and communicative intentions.”

In this sense, substantive word combinations contribute to text cohesion, information structure, and pragmatic meaning. For example:

- Uzbek: *“yurt ravnaqi uchun xizmat”*
- English: *“service for national development”*

Such phrases reflect ideological and cultural priorities embedded in language use.



The relevance of studying national and cultural specificity in noun phrases extends beyond theoretical linguistics. It has practical implications in several fields:

1. **Translation Studies** – Misinterpretation of culturally marked noun phrases can lead to loss of meaning.

2. **Language Teaching** – Understanding cultural nuances improves communicative competence.

3. **Intercultural Communication** – Awareness of linguistic differences reduces misunderstanding.

For instance, translating “*mehmonnavoz xalq*” simply as “*hospitable people*” may not fully capture the cultural depth associated with hospitality in Uzbek society.

In conclusion, the introduction establishes that substantive word combinations are not merely syntactic units but complex linguistic structures shaped by cultural, cognitive, and social factors. Their study requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates structural, functional, and cultural perspectives.

METHODS

The present study adopts a comprehensive qualitative research design aimed at investigating the national and cultural specificity of substantive word combinations in English and Uzbek. Given the complexity of the research problem, which involves the interaction between linguistic structure, semantics, and cultural meaning, a multi-method approach has been employed.

First, the **descriptive method** is used to identify and systematize the structural features of noun phrases in both languages. This approach is rooted in the tradition of structural linguistics, particularly in the works of Leonard Bloomfield, who emphasized the importance of analyzing language based on observable forms. Through this method, noun phrases such as “*economic policy development*” and “*iqtisodiy siyosat rivoji*” are examined in terms of their internal structure and syntactic organization.

Second, the **comparative method** plays a central role in the study. By comparing English and Uzbek noun phrases, the research aims to reveal both universal and language-specific features. According to Edward Sapir, no two languages represent the same social reality, which makes comparison essential for uncovering cultural differences. For example:

- English: “*family values*”
- Uzbek: “*oila qadriyatlari*”

Although semantically equivalent, the Uzbek version carries stronger cultural connotations related to collectivism and tradition.

Third, the study employs **semantic analysis**, focusing on the meaning relations within noun phrases. This approach is influenced by Charles J. Fillmore’s theory of semantic roles, which highlights how linguistic structures encode relationships between participants and concepts.



For instance:

- “*teacher’s responsibility*” → agent–role relation
- “*o‘qituvchining mas’uliyati*” → same semantic relation expressed morphologically

Fourth, **contextual and discourse analysis** is applied to examine how noun phrases function within larger texts. This method draws on the work of Teun A. van Dijk, who argues that meaning is constructed in context and influenced by social factors. For example:

- Uzbek: “*yosh avlod tarbiyasi*”
- English: “*education of the younger generation*”

These phrases often appear in political and educational discourse, reflecting societal priorities. In addition, the research incorporates insights from Cultural Linguistics, which views language as a repository of cultural knowledge. This perspective allows for the identification of culturally marked elements within noun phrases.

The data for the study is collected from:

- literary texts
- academic publications
- media discourse
- everyday spoken language

This ensures a representative sample of authentic language use.

Overall, the methodological framework integrates structural, functional, and cultural approaches, enabling a comprehensive analysis of substantive word combinations as both linguistic and cultural phenomena.

3. RESULTS

The analysis reveals several key patterns demonstrating the national and cultural specificity of substantive word combinations.

3.1 Culturally Marked Lexical Units

One of the most significant findings is that many noun phrases contain culturally specific lexical elements. These elements reflect values, traditions, and social norms.

For example:

- English: “*individual freedom*”
- Uzbek: “*jamoaviy hamjihatlik*”

While English discourse emphasizes individuality, Uzbek language often prioritizes collectivism.

This observation supports the idea proposed by Edward Sapir that language reflects cultural reality.

3.2 Metaphorical Conceptualization

Metaphor plays a crucial role in shaping noun phrases. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson:

“Metaphors structure how we perceive and understand the world.”



Examples:

- English: “*a broken heart*”
- Uzbek: “*yuragi singan inson*”

Although similar conceptually, Uzbek expressions often carry stronger emotional intensity.

3.3 Structural and Typological Differences

The study confirms clear typological differences between the two languages.

- English → analytic structure
- Uzbek → agglutinative structure

Examples:

- English: “*the door of the house*”
- Uzbek: “*uyning eshigi*”

Here, English uses prepositions, while Uzbek uses suffixes.

This supports Wilhelm von Humboldt’s idea that languages differ in their structural organization of thought.

3.4 Pragmatic and Cultural Functions

Noun phrases also perform important pragmatic functions.

According to Teun A. van Dijk:

“Language structures reflect social relations and communicative goals.”

Examples:

- Uzbek: “*hurmatli ustoz*”
- English: “*respected teacher*”

These phrases encode politeness and social hierarchy.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that substantive word combinations are deeply influenced by cultural and cognitive factors. They serve not only as grammatical units but also as tools for expressing worldview and identity.

From the perspective of Linguistic Relativity, the differences observed between English and Uzbek noun phrases reflect distinct conceptual systems.

For example:

- Uzbek emphasizes relationships and social roles
- English emphasizes categorization and individuality

This aligns with the theories of Benjamin Lee Whorf, who argued that language shapes thought. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of noun phrases in discourse construction. As noted by Michael Halliday:

“Language is a resource for making meaning.”

Noun phrases contribute to:

- textual cohesion
- semantic density
- communicative clarity



In translation, these differences can lead to misunderstandings. For instance:

- “*mehmonnavozlik madaniyati*” → “hospitality culture”

While accurate, the translation may not fully capture the cultural depth of the original.

Therefore, understanding the cultural specificity of noun phrases is essential for:

- translators
- language teachers
- intercultural communication specialists

Conclusion

Substantive word combinations represent a key intersection between language and culture. Their structure, semantics, and usage reflect national identity, cultural values, and cognitive patterns. The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek demonstrates that linguistic differences are not merely formal but deeply meaningful. Consequently, the study of noun phrases from a cultural perspective is essential for a comprehensive understanding of language.

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